



## the portage path behavioral health reference guide to: **Anger Management**

**A**nger is defined as a completely normal, usually healthy, human emotion. Anger by itself is not good or bad - it's what the person does with his/her anger that matters most. According to the *Mental Medicine in Practice Journal*, 20 percent of Americans experience levels of hostility high enough to be harmful to their health. There is evidence that some children are born irritable, touchy and easily angered, and that these signs are present at an early age. Researchers have also found that family background plays a role. Typically, people who are easily angered come from families that are disruptive and not skilled at emotional communications. Anger expert David Brown says, Anger often becomes a problem when: you stay angry for too long, the anger you feel is too much for the situation, the way you express your anger is inappropriate or destructive, you stuff your anger inside until you explode or experience medical problems, your anger leads to negative consequences (relationships end; you get arrested), and/or you feel out of control of your anger.

People who are unable to manage their anger often experience the following physical symptoms:

### **Signs & Symptoms of Anger**

- Procrastination in the completion of imposed tasks.
- A liking of sadistic humor
- Sarcasm, cynicism or flippancy in conversation
- Smiling while hurting
- Frequent disturbing or frightening dreams
- Difficulty in getting to sleep or sleeping through the night
- Excessive irritability over minor events
- Grinding teeth (especially while sleeping)
- Chronically stiff or sore neck or shoulder muscles
- Over politeness, constant cheerfulness, an attitude of "grin and bear it"
- Waking up tired rather than rested and refreshed

arthritis, aggravation of existing physical symptoms, circulatory disorders, disabilities of the nervous system, emotional disturbances, gastrointestinal disorders, genito-urinary disorders, headaches, and respiratory disorders. Mismanaged anger also has a powerful effect on a person's thoughts, feelings, and behavior. People who express their anger inappropriately are often arguing with others, yelling & screaming, using colorful language, drinking and/or using drugs, rationalizing their behavior, speaking rapidly, and/or fantasizing about getting revenge.

According to the National Mental Health Association web site ([www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)), the three main approaches of expressing your anger in a positive way are:

**Expressing:** your angry feelings in an assertive - not aggressive - manner is the healthiest way to express anger. To do this, you have to learn how to make clear what your needs are, and how to get them met, without hurting others.

**Suppressing:** anger and redirecting it. This happens when you hold in your anger, stop thinking about it and focus on something positive. The aim is to inhibit or suppress your anger and convert it into constructive behavior. The danger in this type of response is that if it isn't allowed outward expression, your anger can turn inward - on yourself. Anger turned inward may cause hypertension, high blood pressure or depression.

**Calming:** yourself down inside. This means not just controlling your outward behavior but also controlling your internal responses, taking steps to lower your heart rate, calm yourself down and let the feelings subside.



## How Can I Learn To Control My Anger?

Perhaps the best way to identify whether or not your suffering from an anger management problem is to ask yourself if your anger has in any way negatively affected your enjoyment of life. If the answer is yes, you may want to explore treatment options.

Counseling can be in the form of individual or group therapy, and may involve medication when necessary. In individual anger management therapy, you have more one-on-one time with the therapist and your experiences can be explored on a deeper level, whereas, in anger management group treatment participants learn from other peoples experiences and gather information from the group leaders. A group is also a great place to learn and practice new ways of dealing with problems. The goal of an anger management group is to learn new, more effective ways to keep anger from being a problem by reducing how long you stay angry and how much anger you feel, and by developing new skills for managing and expressing anger.

Mental health professionals can work with you in developing a range of techniques to help you change your thinking and your behavior. In fact, through the use of counseling, some professionals believe that a highly angry person can move closer to a middle range of anger in about 8 to 10 weeks, depending on circumstances and techniques used.



## 10 Great Ways To Control Your Anger

1. GET AWAY FROM THE SITUATION TO GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO CALM DOWN.
2. CLEAN UP YOUR LANGUAGE BY AVOIDING CUSSING AND NAME CALLING.
3. SLOW DOWN YOUR TALKING AND BREATHING. GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO THINK.
4. LET THE OTHER PERSON HAVE THE LAST WORD SO THE ARGUMENT CAN END.
5. ALLOW YOURSELF THE EXTRA TIME TO DRIVE TO CUT DOWN ON ROAD RAGE.
6. AGREE TO DISAGREE WHEN YOU CAN'T REACH AN AGREEMENT.
7. BE REALISTIC ABOUT WHAT YOU EXPECT FROM PEOPLE AND SITUATIONS.
8. DEVELOP AN ATTITUDE OF RESPECT AND TOLERANCE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT.
9. CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES AND DON'T FIGHT ABOUT THINGS THAT DON'T MATTER.
10. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY OR DO.

If you have identified with the issues discussed in this flyer and you're ready to take the next step toward feeling better, visit our web site or call Portage Path and find out how we can help:

Web Site	<a href="http://www.portagepath.org">www.portagepath.org</a>
Appointments	330-253-3100 800-828-4508

If you feel you're in emotional crisis and you need someone to talk to, call our free 24-hour, 7-day crisis hotline:

Support Hotline	330-434-9144 888-434-8878
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